

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 511

JC 880 038

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TITLE Emerging Characteristics of Women Administrators in Texas Community/Junior Colleges.
PUB DATE 14 Jan 88
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the International Conference for Women in Higher Education (El Paso, TX, January 14, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Characteristics; Administrator Qualifications; Administrators; *Career Development; College Administration; *Community Colleges; *Employment Patterns; Females; *Occupational Mobility; State Surveys; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Texas; *Women Administrators

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the characteristics of women administrators in Texas public community colleges. Specifically, the study examined what positions women administrators occupied at what institutions; their educational, professional, and personal background; career mobility issues; the significance of mentoring; the differences among qualifications, mobility, mentoring, age, and marital status according to administrative rank; and the factors that contributed to their success. Questionnaires were mailed to all women administrators at the state's two-year colleges from the level of coordinator to chancellor (N=294). Study findings, based on a 80% response rate, included the following: (1) women administrators functioned at every level except chancellor, with 50% serving as directors; (2) the majority of the 49 Texas community colleges employed--on the average--between one to five women administrators; (3) 53.8% of the respondents held a master's degree as their highest degree; (4) 53.4% of the respondents were the "founding" administrators for at least one of the positions they had held; (5) 47% were clustered in the student services track, 18.1% were in academic affairs positions, and 17.5% were in administration; (6) only 16 of the 212 respondents had worked in more than one Texas community college; (7) 57% indicated that they had a mentor in their career in higher education administration; and (8) personal contacts were the best source of information about new positions. (UCM)

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ED290511

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in
Texas Community/Junior Colleges**

by Maya Durnovo, Ed.D.

A paper presented at the

International Conference for Women in Higher Education

**El Paso, Texas
January 14, 1988**

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JC 880 038

Emerging Characteristics of Women Administrators in Texas Public Community and Junior Colleges

by Maya Durnova, Ed.D.

Today, the proportional representation of women in top-level administrative positions is substantially greater than it was 10 years ago (K. Moore, et al., 1985). Yet, relatively little is known about women who occupy administrative positions below the level of president. The sparse number of studies are a reflection of the small percentage of women in administrative posts in higher education.

It has only been in the last two decades that women have joined men as college leaders. An American Council on Education study revealed that there was a 200% gain in female community college presidents since 1975 (Taylor 1981). Taylor noted that this gain "symbolizes an enormous positive change in the attitudes of both men and women toward women's leadership and in the actions of decision-makers who influence the selection of presidents" (p. 2).

The literature suggests that women administrators tend to build careers in some areas or tracks more easily than in others (Etaugh, 1985; Green, 1984; K. Moore, 1984). Most women administrators work in community colleges, in lower level positions (Hemming, 1982; Etaugh, 1985; Touchton & Shavlik, 1984). On the whole, women are not mobile (Green & Kellogg, 1982; Moore & Sagaria, 1981; Stokes, 1982). According to most studies, mentoring was found to be important for career advancement (Evans, 1985; Green & Kellogg, 1982; Ironside, 1983; K. Moore, 1982).

The research on women who have attained high-ranking positions indicates that these women not only expanded traditional roles, but developed qualities such as self-reliance, ambition, and assertiveness. The common personality characteristics that emerged in most studies were a high need for achievement, a strong desire for recognition, a deeply embedded work ethic, a need for challenge, and a willingness to accept responsibilities (Eaton, 1984; Kistler, 1979; Ironside, 1983; Nieber, 1975).

This study focused on successful women administrators in Texas.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the characteristics of women administrators in Texas public community and junior colleges. Specifically, the study examined (a) what positions women administrators occupied, and where they were located in Texas public community and junior colleges; (b) their educational, professional, and personal background; (c) career mobility issues; (d) the significance of mentoring;

(e) the differences among qualifications, mobility, mentoring, age, and marital status on administrative rank; and (f) factors that contributed to success.

Population

The population included all Texas public community/junior college women administrators from the level of coordinator to chancellor. The *Women Administrators in Texas Community/Junior Colleges*, adapted from the *Today's Academic Leaders* questionnaire, was used to survey 294 women. An 80% response was achieved. Descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages, means, & standard deviations), analysis of variance, and the chi-square test were used to analyze the data. A 10% sample of the respondents were interviewed by phone to obtain data on factors leading to success.

Results

Results of the study revealed that women administrators in Texas community colleges function at every level, except chancellor. Fifty percent were directors, 30% were above director level, and 20% were below director level. The majority function in mid-management positions. This is an encouraging increase when compared to Kistler (1979), who found California community college women administrators clustered in lower level positions. Table 1 reports the frequencies and percentages of respondent's administrative positions.

Table 1 Respondent's Administrative Positions

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Vice-Chancellor	1	.5
President	4	1.9
Assistant to Chancellor	1	.5
V.P. for Instruction	1	.5
V.P. for Student Services	5	2.4
Executive Dean	1	.5
Dean of Instruction	5	2.4
Dean of Student Services	10	4.7
Dean of Vocational/Tech.	2	.9
Dean of Continuing Education	3	1.4
Dean (other)	5	2.4
Associate Dean	7	3.3
Campus Director	3	1.4
Chair	15	7.1
Directors	107	50.5
Officer	11	5.2
Registrar	5	2.4
Business Office	5	2.4
Coordinator/Manager	15	7.1
Head Librarian	3	1.4
Other	2	.9
Total	212	100.

Texas Public Community and Junior Colleges

The majority of the 49 Texas community colleges employ, on the average, between one to five women administrators. Table 2 lists the frequencies and percentages of women administrators per community college in Texas.

Table 2 Employment by Texas Community/Junior College

College	Frequency	Percentage
Alamo Community College	3	1.4
Alvin Community College	3	1.4
Amarillo College	1	.5
Angelina College	1	.5
Austin Community College	4	1.9
Bee County College	1	.5
Blinn College	3	1.4
Brazosport	2	.9
Central Texas College	3	1.4
Cisco Junior College	2	.9
Claredon College	1	.5
College of the Mainland	2	.9
Collin Community College	6	2.8
Cooke County College	1	.5
Dallas Community College District	35	16.5
Del Mar College	7	3.3
El Paso	10	4.7
Frank Phillips	5	2.4
Galveston College	3	1.4
Grayson County College	1	.5
Hill Junior College	-	-
Houston Community College System	22	10.5
Howard County Junior College	4	1.9
Kilgore College	-	-
Laredo Junior College	3	1.4
Lee College	4	1.9
McLennan Community College	5	2.4
Midland	6	2.8
Navarro College	3	1.4
North Harris County Junior College	6	2.8
Northeast Texas Community College	3	1.4
North Lake College	4	1.9
Odessa College	2	.9
Panola Junior College	2	.9
Paris Junior College	5	2.4
Ranger Junior College	-	-
San Jacinto Junior College	2	.9
South Plains College	3	1.4
Southwest Texas Junior College	1	.5
Tarrant County Junior College	19	9.0
Temple Junior College	5	2.4
Texarkana Community College	1	.5
Texas Southmost College	2	.9
Trinity Valley Community College	4	1.9
Tyler Junior College	-	-
Vernon Regional Junior College	4	1.9
Victoria College	2	.9
Weatherford College	6	2.8
Western Texas College	-	-
Wharton County Junior College	-	-

Education

The highest degree earned by most of respondents, 53.8%, was a master's degree.

Table 3 displays the highest degrees earned.

Table 3
Educational Background

Highest Degree Earned	Frequency	Percentage
Associate	3	1.4
Bachelor's	39	18.4
Master's	114	53.8
Doctorate	46	21.7
Doctorate in Progress	5	2.4
Degree Earned in Texas	166	78.3
Degree Earned outside Texas	46	21.7

First Person To Hold Administrative Position

Over one-half of the respondents, 53.4%, was the "founding" administrator for at least one of her positions. This suggests that women are gaining access to new positions and to the creation of new departments. Ninety-seven of these positions were created in community colleges and 13 outside of higher education. Twenty-three of the respondents were "first person" in two and/or three new jobs. The most frequent new position was director.

Tracks

The study was designed to determine if women administrators clustered in particular tracks and/or if they moved from those tracks. Tracks were defined as student services, academic affairs (instruction), administration, continuing education, and business/accounting. The student services track held 47%, the largest number of respondents. Of these, only eight percent have advanced into other areas, suggesting that women tended to remain in one administrative track. Table 5 reports the numbers and frequencies in each track.

Table 5
Respondents in Student Services Positions

Student Services:	Number	Percentage
V.P. Student Services	5	2.4%
Dean Student Services	10	4.7
Director Student Services	61	28.9
Coordinator	15	7.0
Registrar/Admissions	5	2.4
Financial Aid	3	1.4
Total number	99	47.1%

Respondents in Academic Affairs Positions

Vice President for Instruction	1	.5%
Dean of Instruction	5	2.4
Dean of Vocational/Technical	3	1.4
Chair	14	6.6
Director	13	6.2
Coordinator of Health Services	2	.9
Total	38	18.1%

Respondents in Administration

President/CEO	4	1.9%
Vice-Chancellor	1	.5
Director Public Information	14	6.6
Director of Personnel	7	3.3
Campus Director	3	1.4
Director (other)	1	.5
Coordinator /Manager	7	3.3
Total	37	17.5%

Respondents in Continuing Education

Dean of Continuing Education	3	1.4%
Director of Continuing Education	8	3.8
Total	11	5.2%

Respondents in Business Affairs

Dean of Business	5	2.4%
Director of Business Affairs	5	2.4
Officer of Business Affairs	6	2.8
Total	27	7.6%

Professional Work Experience

The average number of positions held was 3.5 in an average number of 16.2 years. Experience specifically related to community college employment indicated an average number of 2.2 positions in an average of 9.6 years. The current position was held for 5.1 years and the preceding position for 4.9 years.

Mobility

Of the 212 respondents, only 16 have worked in more than one Texas community college. The majority of the respondents have build their careers in one community college. This suggests that women tend not to be mobile within the state.

Are women mobile within their institution?

On the average, women administrators have held two positions during their community college work experience. A comparison was made between the current position and the preceding position. Administrative positions were divided into three levels:

- 1) upper level -- which included vice-chancellor, president, assistant to the chancellor, vice-president, executive dean, dean, chair and campus director (total = 62).
- 2) middle level -- which included all directors (except campus director) (total = 107).
- 3) lower levels -- which included assistant director, lead instruction, coordinator, registrar, librarian, business office related and manager (total = 44).

One-hundred and nineteen women administrators moved upward from a lower or mid-level position to an upper or mid-level position during their most recent job change, while 72 stayed in the same position. A significant difference ($p < .05$) was found between these two groups. This suggests that women are advancing from lower or mid-level to mid- and upper-level positions.

Mentoring

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they had a mentor in their career in higher education administration. Women who have had mentors were in significantly ($p < .05$) higher administrative positions than women who had not experienced mentoring, leading to the assumption that a mentor is an important factor in the career development and advancement of respondents. This study confirms the findings of Evans (1985), Ironside (1982), Kanter & Wheatley (1978), Kistler (1979), and K. Moore (1982), who found that mentoring was important in the career development of women administrators.

The mentor was helpful with career advancement: providing opportunity, visibility, sharing information, providing encouragement and confidence, being a role model, encouraging the protege to continue her education and teaching how to be politically astute. Repeatedly, respondents, including those who have not had a mentor, recommend a mentor relationship.

Of those mentored, 62.9% had a male mentor, and the majority (87.9%) were Caucasian. Mentor relationships ranged from one year to 21 years. The most frequently cited time span was three years.

All the respondents indicated that the mentor relationship was important and valuable in their career development and career advancement.

How were current positions obtained?

The best source for learning about the position currently held has been through personal contact, leading to the assumption that being well-integrated in the collegial system, and "knowing people," is the best way to learn about new positions.

Table 7
Method for Becoming a Candidate to Current Position

Method	Frequency/Percentage	
Applied directly	73	36.0%
Appointed by senior administrator	37	18.2
Mentor recommended	26	12.8
Nominated (other than mentor)	26	12.8
Assumed acting appointment	15	7.4
Other	15	7.4
Invitation from search committee	9	4.4
Created position & got it funded	2	1.0

Table 8
Best Source for Identifying Current Position

Source	Frequency/Percentage	
Personal Contacts	86	43.2%
My mentor	36	18.1
Other	35	17.6
Institutions job announcement	25	12.6
Ad in newspaper, journal, etc.	16	8.0
Employment agency	1	.5

Are women seeking a job change?

Only 14.6% of the respondents indicated they were actively seeking a job change, and 25.3% were not sure. This finding is similar to Moore et al. (1985) who found that women administrators were either not seeking a job change or were not sure.

Thirty-eight percent of those who did want to change (a frequency of 33 respondents), were seeking positions at a higher level in preferably another two-year public community college. They indicated that they were actively developing new contacts in order to find a new job.

Personal Background

Personal background revealed that the average woman administrator was 42.7 years of age. The Texas community college woman administrator was slightly younger than the national mean age, 46.4 years, found by Moore et al. (1985). Sixty-one percent were married and 37% were single. The majority of the women administrators, 84.4% were Caucasian, 8.5% were Black, and 7.1% were Hispanic.

Close to one-half of the respondents, 48%, were the first-born in the family. The majority of first-born administrators have held upper-level or mid-level positions, suggesting that first-borns tend to be in higher ranking jobs. In this study, administrators who were "only children" did not fall in upper-level positions, but rather in mid-level directorships.

The majority of respondents earned higher degrees than either parent. One-fourth of the fathers had only a high school education and slightly less than one-third of the mothers had earned a high school diploma.

Would You Be an Administrator Again?

In answer to the question, would you be an administrator again, 71.4% indicated they would, 8.1% would not select administration, and 20.5% were not sure. Of the remarks that accompanied a "yes," the following representative opinions were made: a) I enjoy my job, b) Seek a doctorate early in your career, c) I enjoy the responsibility and the rewards, and d) I would have started earlier.

What factors shape administrative careers?

1. Were there significant differences among the administrative ranks that women administrators attain? A chi-square test found a significant difference among the three levels at the $p < .01$ level of probability. There were significantly more women in mid-level administrative positions than in upper or lower levels, and significantly more in upper levels than in lower.

2. Were there significant differences among qualifications, mobility, mentoring, marital status and age on administrative rank? A five-way analysis of variance revealed a significant, $p < .05$, main effect for mobility, degree earned, and mentoring on administrative level. Women who changed positions moved upward into a significantly higher level. Likewise, those who earned a doctorate and had a mentor relationship were also at a significantly higher administrative level. The interaction between mobility and degree was found to be significant. Women who changed positions and had a doctorate were more likely to advance to top-level administrative posts.

What factors lead to success?

A follow-up telephone interview was conducted with 10% of the sample, or 21 respondents. The telephone interview sought to probe more deeply into factors that led to success. Administrators were selected by region for a state-wide representative sample.

1. Did family background influence career?

The majority of the women interviewed had families who expected their daughter to achieve, to do her best, and to succeed. Family milieu facilitated, encouraged, and nurtured accomplishment. Six of the 21 women were first born or only children, and six were the first female. Eleven identified their fathers as being the influential figure, seven specified mothers, and three indicated that both parents were equally influential. In most cases, the respondent was the successful child.

2. Did school years influence career?

All the women were outstanding students in either high school, college, or graduate school. Most were remarkable scholars at every level of their education. Unanimously, they conceded that their motivation and drive to succeed, fostered from early childhood or tapped later in life, was the determining factor in their academic accomplishments.

3. What other factors/people influenced career?

The majority (19) had mentors. Of those with a mentor, all highly recommended the relationship because it provided a valuable emotional and intellectual support system, as

well as access to crucial information. In several cases the mentor was responsible for an important new job or promotion. Many urged other women administrators to become mentors.

4. What characteristics were needed to be a successful administrator?

Success was dependent on having the right credentials, being able to get along with people, competence, leadership skills, tenacity and stamina, creativity, being political, conscientiousness, a "tough skin," practicality and the ability to actualize ideas, a sense of fairness, and patience. Mentioned repeatedly by most of the women was the willingness to work hard and the love of one's work. The theme of working ardently was reiterated again and again.

5. What kind of experiences did women have in higher education?

Most respondents were very optimistic and observed progress with positive changes for women in administration over the past few years. Approximately one-third had a negative perspective; they felt discriminated against and not taken seriously. The topic of discrimination was volunteered by half of the respondents, others indicated that women were not treated seriously and that they must work extra hard to prove themselves. "It's still a man's world" surfaced three times. Overall, women experienced the need to work extra hard and accomplish beyond average expectations. The common explanation was that women were noticed more because they were infrequent in numbers.

6. What were the rewards of working?

The rewards of working were very positive for the majority. Fulfillment and the opportunity to contribute something valuable was mentioned repeatedly. Without exception, all the women administrators loved the community college environment. Many were motivated by the challenge, others by serving students, and some by the prestige of being affiliated with an institution of higher education. The feeling of successful accomplishment was also a source of reward.

7. What suggestions could be made for future women administrators?

Advice for women seeking careers in administration focused on being committed, acquiring the terminal degree, networking, always being a professional, and never giving up. Specific suggestions were: dedicate yourself to excellence, do not be too pushy or aggressive, be a mentor for other women, become politically aware, and build solid underpinnings. Overall, respondents felt that it was possible for women to succeed in community college administration.

Implications

1. Women administrators are found throughout Texas community colleges and they are gaining access to higher-level administrative positions. According to this study, a significant number of women have moved into upper-level positions during their last job change. While the majority of the respondents are directors, the number of administrators above director level is significantly greater than the number below director, which implies that it is possible to reach high-ranking positions. The path is marked by an education, a mentor relationship, an opportunity to advance, a commitment to excellence, and a personal approach that is positive and confident.

2. Each administrator who was interviewed for this study has indicated that she was also an outstanding student in either high school, undergraduate, or graduate school, suggesting that scholastic achievement may be related to future success in higher education. Perhaps the early pattern of success and leadership fosters a positive relationship with education that develops into a successful future career.

Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between upper-level administrators and those with a doctorate, which leads to the conclusion that a terminal degree is necessary for women seeking advancement.

3. Mentoring is another significant factor in the career development and promotion of women administrators in Texas. There is a significant relationship between women who are mentored and administrative rank. This suggests that a mentor relationship is important, not only for learning the tools of the trade, but also for advancement. All respondents have described mentoring as a positive experience that increases career satisfaction, personal growth, and advancement. Therefore, it may be implied that a mentor may make the critical difference.

4. Over one-half of the respondents to this survey have been the first person to hold a newly created position. This result is encouraging in that it affirms the conclusion that women are gaining access to administrative posts. These positions are important because they provide the groundwork for the creation of the scope and quality of the position.

5. The best way to learn about a new job is through personal contact, according to the respondents of this survey. This suggests that it is important to network, to become well integrated with one's colleagues, both within the college setting and outside. Only 18.1% consider their mentor to be the best source for identifying their current position. This may be explained by the fact that most women have built their administrative careers in one

community college and most mentor relationships have transpired between two administrators. In other words, most relationships begin when the respondent is already employed in her college.

6. Women administrators are not geographically mobile and they are not interested in seeking employment elsewhere. Only 14.6% of the respondents are actively pursuing a job change. The majority have built their careers at primarily one community college, implying that women have chosen not to be geographically mobile.

7. According to this study, women rarely move from one administrative track to another. This supports the literature that indicates that once launched in a given track, individuals do not move easily to another track (K. Moore, 1984). Women in this study are pocketed in the student services areas.

8. The majority of Texas women administrators are Caucasian. Although Black and Hispanic administrators are found at every administrative level, their representation is noticeably small.

9. Three salient themes emerge from the interview data on factors leading to success: (1) Career opportunities for women administrators are improving. (2) The path to upper level administrative posts is difficult because women administrators perceive some discriminatory practices. (3) Success is achieved through a commitment to excellence, a willingness to work hard, and a positive attitude that reaches beyond barriers or discrimination and embraces only a challenge.

10. The experiences reported by respondents of this study ranged from highly laudatory to extremely critical. The reason for this diversity is traced to only one place, the woman herself. The personal histories of each woman who has been interviewed reflects not only her opinions, but also her personal make-up, her personal bias and perspective, and her personal attitude. And it is in the personal approach to her present experience and her future opportunities that the answer to success lies. A positive resolve to succeed is what gives birth to a champion. This resolve is not found within the college setting, or in policy and procedure manuals, or in legislation. It is found within the woman herself.

Recommendations

From the findings and implications of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. The first recommendation is that women administrators should strive to develop a mentor relationship. In turn, they should become mentors for other women seeking a similar career path. The findings of this study indicate that women who have mentors are more likely to reach upper level posts. The value and importance of a mentor has also been verified through telephone interviews and previous research.

The second recommendation is that women should pursue a terminal degree if they seek advanced positions in higher education. The significant relationship between administrative rank and women with doctorates strongly suggests that the terminal degree is a necessary qualification. This finding was affirmed repeatedly through the interviews. Learn to network is the third recommendation emerging from this study. The process of networking not only assists in learning about new positions, but also fosters a support system among women administrators.

The women in this study are success stories. Their success is built not only on skills and qualifications, but also on their positive approach, their personal commitment, their dedication to excellence, and their love of the community college, leading to the fourth recommendation. One must strive toward excellence and work because of a personal commitment. Through this type of involvement, women administrators not only achieve success, but they also become powerful role models for both male and female colleagues, as well as on the aspirations of young students.

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